

# NATIONAL SURVEY OF COLLEGE GRADUATES FOLLOW-UP RESULTS FROM THE NO BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDY

Genny Burns

## I. Executive Summary

The No Bachelor's Degree (NBD) Study was one of five subsamples of the 1993 National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG) followed-up during the 1995 NSCG interviewing. The purpose was to learn more about the quality of the 1993 sample.

The frame for the 1993 NSCG was the set of persons in the 1990 decennial census sample edited detail file reporting a bachelor's degree or higher. About 8.5% of the NSCG respondents were classified as out-of-scope because they told us they did not have a bachelor's degree or higher. This rate was higher than we had expected. According to the census content reinterview survey, about 3.2% of the respondents reporting a bachelor's degree or higher in the census, reported differently in the reinterview.<sup>1</sup>

We selected a sample of 300 of these out-of-scope cases for follow-up interviews in 1995 to see how many were misclassified in 1993. About 20% of the follow-up respondents said they actually did have a bachelor's degree or higher by April 1990.

If we exclude the work of a group of Field Representatives (FRs) with unusually high percentages of cases with no bachelor's degrees, the NBD rate drops to 7.7%. If we adjust that figure by the percentage of cases in the NBD study who said they did have a degree by April 1990, the NBD rate becomes 6.1%, still somewhat higher than the census content reinterview rate.

## II. Overview

One of the requirements for eligibility for the 1993 NSCG was a bachelor's degree or higher as of April 1990, the time of the 1990 census. About 14,000 respondents to the 1993 survey reported they did not have at least a bachelor's degree. This is about 8.5% of the total number of respondents, including out-of-scope cases. We did not anticipate this many cases, since the sample was selected from persons who reported having at least a bachelor's degree in the 1990 census.

Table 1 shows the number of NBDs as a percentage of the number of completed interviews and out-of-scopes by data collection mode. The NBD percentage increases with the later data collection modes. A possible explanation is that people who didn't have a degree decided they were not eligible for the survey and didn't respond. Each attempt would have a higher percentage of NBDs remaining.

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<sup>1</sup>1990 Census of Population and Housing Evaluation and Research Program Research Reports, Content Reinterview Survey: Accuracy of Data for Selected Population and Housing Characteristics as Measured by Reinterview, 1990 CPE-E-1, October 1993.

**Table 1. NDB percentage by mode**

Data collection mode	NBD Percentage
First mailout	3.9%
Second mailout	9.6%
CATI	14.6%
PV	18.4%
Total	8.5%

The NSCG quality control reinterview program,<sup>2</sup> which reinterviewed a sample of the personal visit (PV) cases, should have given us some information about the quality of NBD responses. Because they were out-of-scope of the NSCG and because of staff and cost constraints, we agreed that the reinterview sample of these cases would be done mostly by telephone. Unfortunately, the telephone number was not recorded for many of these out-of-scope cases. Some regional offices found falsification on out-of-scope cases when the reinterview was done by personal visit. This falsification may have happened without being detected in other regions because the reinterview was done only by telephone.

A. Description of Follow-up Sample

For 1995 we included a sample of 300 cases with no bachelor's degree to ask once more about their degree status. We oversampled cases that were interviewed in 1993 by Field Representatives (FRs) with unusually high out-of-scope rates. The 300 cases were divided equally into two strata. Stratum 2, with about 12% of the 14,000 NBDs, contained only cases from FRs with high out-of-scope rates. Stratum 1 contained all other NBD cases, regardless of data collection mode.

The follow-up sample was not included in the 1995 NSCG estimates or counted against response rates but was used only to compare with the 1993 responses. We also compared strata.

B. Interview Procedures

NBD Follow-up respondents were asked if they had a bachelor's degree or higher and, if so, when they received it. Attachment A shows the questions asked during this interview.

The NBD Follow-up interviews were conducted from telephone centers using pencil and paper rather than CATI. The interviewing was started the first week in July 1995 and had a cut-off date of early January 1996. A shortage of funds resulted in the cancellation of the personal visit interviewing that was planned as part of this study.

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<sup>2</sup>There was also a response error reinterview, but out-of-scope cases were not included.

### III. Results

Table 2 shows the results from the telephone follow-up of the NBD sample. Some highlights:

- Stratum 1 had a much higher interview completion rate (52.4% vs. 28.9%) than Stratum 2, which was the suspect stratum.
- Stratum 1 had a much lower unable to locate rate (22.8% vs. 48.3%) than Stratum 2.
- The percentages of interviewed cases with degrees (21.1% vs. 14.0%) were not significantly different with this small sample.
- We knew from the 1993 reinterview that some falsification occurred. The number of respondents in this study with degrees and the differences between the strata suggest that there were additional falsification or other misclassification errors.

**Table 2. Results of NBD Follow-up Study by Stratum**

Status	Total		Stratum 1		Stratum 2	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
TOTAL	300 <sup>3</sup>	100.0	145	100.0	149	100.0
Interviewed	125	41.7	76	52.4	43	28.9
Degree by 4/90	22	7.3	16	11.0	6	4.0
No Degree by 4/90	97	32.3	60	41.4	37	24.8
Out of Scope	2	0.7	1	0.7	1	0.7
Unresolved	173	57.7	68	46.9	105	70.5
Unable to locate	105	35.0	33	22.8	72	48.3
Possible locate	68	22.7	35	24.1	33	22.1

#### A. Percentage of Interviewed Cases

From the 300 cases selected for the follow-up, 52.4% of the cases in Stratum 1 were interviewed while only 28.9% of the cases in Stratum 2 were interviewed. Under ordinary circumstances, we would expect no difference between these two percentages. This difference suggests that in the 1993 NSCG, some Stratum 2 FRs marked respondents that they were unable to reach as NBD rather than continue trying to locate

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<sup>3</sup> Out of the 125 interviewed cases, six (4.8%) have missing information. These six cases are included in the totals but are not included in the separate stratum totals. Thus, the stratum totals and percentages do not add to the combined total.

them or report them as Type A noninterview cases. Cases which were not actually located in 1993 would be more difficult to locate in 1995.

**B. Degree Status**

Excluding the six interviews with missing information, 22 (18.1%) of the 121 remaining respondents (interviewed or out of scope) had a degree by April 1990. The individual stratum percentages are 20.8% for Stratum 1, 13.6% for Stratum 2.

In addition, we noted that nine respondents from Stratum 1 and seven from Stratum 2 reported receiving a degree between April 1990 and April 1993. One respondent in Stratum 1 and two in Stratum 2 reported receiving a degree after April 1993.

**C. Unable to Locate Cases**

In looking at just the unresolved cases, the percentages of unable to locates were 48.5% in Stratum 1 and 68.6% in Stratum 2. Cases that were not actually located in 1993 would be more difficult to locate in this follow-up. Perhaps this explains why Stratum 2 had a higher percentage of these cases.

Although the differences in interview and unable to locate rates between Stratum 1 and Stratum 2 indicate that there may have been some misclassification in Stratum 2, these results are not conclusive. If personal visit follow-up had been conducted on the unable to locate cases, the additional data could have supported or refuted the idea of misclassification in the suspect stratum.

**D. Comparison with 1995 NSCG Results**

Although in the 1995 NSCG some mail-outs were done before the CATI, we expected that completed interview rates and unable to locate rates for the NBD follow-up study would be only slightly different from those of the 1995 NSCG after CATI. After all, the 1995 NSCG sample and the NBD Follow-up cases all should have been located in 1993. The comparisons of 1995 NSCG rates with 1993 NSCG follow-up rates are below:

**Table 3. Interview Status for NSCG and Follow-up**

Interview Status	1995 NSCG Mail/CATI	1993 NBD Follow-up		
		Total	Stratum 1	Stratum 2
Completed interviews	58.8%	41.7%	52.4%	28.9%
Unable to locate	11.9%	35.0%	22.8%	48.3%

NSCG cases were not classified as unable to locate after CATI. That determination would have been made after PV interviewing. The 11.9% includes all unresolved cases after CATI. It is an upper limit to what the unable to locate rate would have been if interviewing stopped at CATI. Still the rates for the NBD sample are much higher. The complete interview rate in Stratum 1 is not significantly different from the NSCG, but the rate in Stratum 2 is much lower.

E. Address Check

For the interviewed cases, the completed 1995 NSCG locating sheets were reviewed by stratum to determine if there was a difference between the address where the respondent was contacted in the 1993 survey and the address of the 1995 follow-up. This information was inconclusive since the FRs did not always contact the respondent but got their information through a friend, relative, or the school where they obtained their degree. For the cases where respondents were contacted, the FRs did not always verify the addresses since the telephone numbers, not the addresses, were their source of contact.

IV. What Did We Learn?

The main purpose of this study was to learn more about the quality of the 1993 sample by estimating how many of the NBD cases were classified incorrectly. We did this by asking a small sample of the NBDs the degree question one more time.

We can't say for certain whether the NBDs in Stratum 2 cases were there because the FR classified them that way to avoid a noninterview or they were assigned to FRs with much higher than average rates of actual NBDs. However, if we exclude all Stratum 2 NBDs and all other work assigned to the the Stratum 2 FRs, we can produce a modified version of Table 1.

**Table 4. NDB percentage by mode,  
all work by Stratum 2 FRs excluded**

Data collection mode	NBD Percentage
First mailout	3.9%
Second mailout	9.6%
CATI	14.6%
PV	13.4%
Total	7.7%

Furthermore, assuming the follow-up data are correct, it would appear that about 20.8% of the NBDs in the 1993 survey were incorrectly classified as out of scope. (We use the Stratum 1 percentage because it includes 88% of all NBDs, and cases from all data collection modes.) This implies an NBD rate of about 6.1% ( $7.7\% \times (1 - .208)$ ) rather than the 8.5% of Table 1.

Attachment A

Questions for 1993 No Bachelor's Degree

**Hello, my name is ( ) from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. We are doing a special followup study to the 1993 National Survey of College Graduates we contacted you for a few years ago.**

1. Do you have a bachelor's degree or higher?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, ask 1b, otherwise skip to item 2.

**1b. In what month and year was your FIRST bachelor's degree awarded?**

\_\_ \_\_ Month

\_\_ \_\_ Year

**2. Thank you for your time.**